



MARCH 2026

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WHAT TO DO

Well, it is March, waterfowl season is pretty much over with unless you are chasing sky carp up north. For us, the Snow Geese have pretty much have travelled north by the time you read this, might be a few stragglers coming through, the young ones, because they do not know any better, but for the most part it is done, so what to do now?

My garage still has my sleds I used or was going to use for when I had reservations for BK Leach that needs to be put up. I was lucky this year, I had two reservations and some pretty good dates too, however, due to the ice conditions during those hunts and the bird counts I did not go, which was a good thing too, since on both days BK did not kill a thing, but as a good friend of mine says, 'It is Not the killing, It is the Going'. Granted, I have some memorable hunts at BK when it was iced up and sub freezing temps but this old body of mine said no.

My four wheeler in the garage needs to be power washed from using it all season long. She did well for me this year, did not break down at all. Last year I had to change out a battery and a starter. Have you priced batteries lately? Get ready for a shock, they are not the old liquid batteries anymore, these new gel type batteries are the standard now, which I have to admit, it performed very well when we had those single digit temps and the four wheeler started right up without a hiccup.

I did managed to get all of hunting gear out of the truck and into the basement. Granted, it is strewn all over the place, but it is in the basement. I need to go through it all, empty my water bottles, throw out any blind food or store it for next year.

Also a good time to clean my waders, go though my hunting jackets, store any gear in a specific spot on my hunting shelf so I can find it next fall.

Decoys, since I did not get out to BK, I still went through my decoys I wanted to take and they are sitting in the middle of the basement floor, so need to put them up. I went through a motion decoy phase this year which I call the 'Circus' when I deploy them all. Need to put them up too, get all of their charging cords together since each one has their own, make sure all the batteries are charged up and are disconnected and put a reminder in my phone to check the charge on them six months from now to ensure the batteries are still good for the coming season.

Then there are the guns, I used four this year, working with my TSS and duplex rounds, 12,20,28 gauges and 410. They all need to be cleaned, which means I need to pull them all out of the safe and spend a half day cleaning them

So much stuff to do, what to do, what to do, I think I will go take a nap and put it off until I need to go mow the yard or some other project I don't want to do around the house! How about you?

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MEMBERS MEETING

This month's members meeting we will be having a discussion about decoy carving presented by Ken Liebel. He has presented us with this subject matter a few years back and it was always an enjoyable discussion. So come on out and enjoy the time!

FUND RAISER UPDATE

After all of the bills were paid we had a very successful fund raiser, raising over \$300 to add back to the coffers. Thanks for your support! The winning ticket of the meat raffle went to Willie Hate who is an associate of one of the workers at Borgett's Bar & Grill

BOARD ELECTIONS

WE ARE STILL IN NEED OF A MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN.

Ever had or thought there was a problem with the association? Ever complained about one thing or another on why this association does this or that and should do it this way? Ever thought about becoming a solution to these problems instead of just complaining about them? Here is your chance! There will be board member elections. Step up now and put your name in the hat. So if you are interested in becoming a board member, or if you have questions on becoming a board member, you can ask any board member, talk to Jerry, email your questions or interest to mvdha@mvdha.com or mail them to the address on the back of this newsletter and they will be forward to Jerry. We currently have our Membership position vacant and need it filled. If you want to make a change, here is your chance.

TROUT TRIP UPDATE

MVDHA is planning on our annual Trout Trip this coming year. The dates will be 13 March 2026 through

15 March 2026. Coming home on the 15th. We will be staying at Trout Hollow Lodge at Taneycomo as we did last year. The address for Trout Hollow Lodge is: 1500 Acacia Club Rd, Hollister, MO 65672. To reserve your room call Trout Hollow at 417-334- 2332 and tell them you are part of MVDHA or online at <https://trouthollow.com/>

Reserve your room now so you can get the room you want. If something comes up that you have to cancel, you have two weeks before the trip to cancel without any penalties.

Don't forget that if you need to reserve a boat or a slip to set that up also. If you are a military veteran they also give discounts for that too. If you have never gone to one of our annual fishing trips to Taneycomo you are really missing out on one of the best trips or events that we do. It is always a great trip and Trout Hollow is one of the best areas to go to down there.

One note to mention, if you bring any food to be cooked at the cook-out, please make sure it is totally thawed out so there are no issues when it is deep fried. Hopefully we will see you there!

ANNUAL DUES UPDATE

We still have several people who have not renewed their annual dues. This will be your last reminder before you are dropped off the membership. Please consider renewing your membership dues of \$25. If you have not paid your dues yet, you can bring your money to the next members meeting or mail your check to the address on the back.

DELTA BANQUET

Delta Waterfowl Confluence Chapter

Saturday, March 21, 2026

MVDHA BOARD

President: Ken Liebel

First V. Pres.:

Scott Thoele

Fin. Secretary:

Rob Mueller

Rec. Secretary:

Bill Hilgeman

Correspondence

Secretary: Bill Hilgeman

Membership Chairman:

Vacant

Board of Directors:

Chairman of the Board

Jerry Mercurio

Asst Chairman of the Board

Art Wende

Directors:

Brad Douglass,

Jerry Mercurio Jr.,

James Edwards

Nick Witte

Gary Hirsch

Doors Open: 6:00 PM | Dinner: 7:00 PM

The Christy | 9000 Veterans Memorial Pkwy | O'Fallon, MO 63366

Ticket Options:

Youth Ticket - \$35

Single Ticket - \$80

Couples Ticket - \$150

Silver Table - \$600

Includes: 8 Event Tickets, 8 Delta hats, 8 Friends of Delta Memberships, 4 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, and Advertising at Event and on Social Media.

Gold Table - \$1,000

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 8 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Swamp Gear pack 20 Mag Bag Cooler

Platinum Table - \$2,500

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 16 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Savage Axis 30-06

For more information, please contact: Jameson Perkins at (314) 707-9543 | perkinsjameson27@gmail.com

15 MINUTES UPDATE

If you had 15 minutes to sit down with Jason Sumners, MDC Director, to discuss waterfowl hunting in the conservation areas,

what would be the one question you would ask or discuss? This was asked out on a Facebook Waterfowl Hunting in Missouri group. The responses I received were varied, some were interesting, some I know in the back of my head would have been shot down almost immediately but they were all given to Jason for consideration:

Water levels in the conservation areas had several responses.

Hunters would like to have pools filled to hunt the same number of parties at the beginning of the season as you do at the end of the season with exception of Duck Creek or areas with flooded timber. They do understand that the practice of slowly raising the water levels throughout the year but this diminishes the number of parties that can go out.

Have pumps readily available in case one goes down. This appears to be an ongoing issue with pumps in the conservation areas of when a pump goes down. IE Eagle Bluffs.

Bring back the river blinds

Safety was the biggest reason for this, along with a long and standing heritage of hunting the river.

Hunters are going to try and hunt the Mississippi in any size boat.

Hunting from a stable platform is much safer.

Heritage which has been handed down for years.

The draw process, the building of the blinds, the anticipation of the years to come. I could go on and on.

Quick Draw Modifications

Various responses about quick draw

Get rid of it entirely (Not very likely).

Only have Quick Draw for pre-season and give out two reservations. During the season quick draw will not be available and only be poor man drawing

Put a validation into the existing application of when hunters are entering for quick draw that they are the actual hunter. I have seen personally where a hunter will have non waterfowlers, family members or hunters that do not hunt public MDC areas to provide the hunter with their conservation number and birth date in order to game the system making it unfair for the average hunter. With a validation, sending the hunter an email with a validation number to enter, would prevent this, mostly.

Hunting areas

Add conservation areas in the Southwest region for duck hunting, very few in that area.

Conservation areas upkeep, IE Columbia Bottoms, Marais Temp Claire.

Either maintain them are sell them. Have you seen Columbia Bottoms?

Add more hunting areas for the public

When taking areas away from hunting, for example Columbia Bottoms was managed for waterfowl and it is no longer, add an additional hunting areas.

In your smaller conservation areas, have a small marsh management program to allow hunting in order to spread out pressure from the quick draw areas. Cooney Lake, Truman lake, Busch to name a few areas to consider.

Change the refuge areas and the hunt areas every five years

to break up waterfowl patterning.

Manage areas for hunters not Agriculture profits

Need more flooded corn.

Complete infrastructure projects and maintenance of areas in a timely manner within 3 to 5 years instead of no ending.

Continue transparency on projects

The public does not know what is going on with ongoing projects or timelines.

Manage all areas similar to the more popular ones

Do not remove existing blinds in the areas, it is difficult for older folks or hunters with kids to get them out to introduce them to waterfowl hunting.

Morning Draw at the Conservation Areas

Have you personally attended a morning draw, to see the anticipation of the hunters, wondering if they will get a low enough pill to be able to hunt that day, to listen to the hunters of their chatter of successful hunts or failures of the past. To see how the MDC employees treat or respect the hunters. If you have not, I highly recommend it.

Implement nonresident fee for morning draws, restrict nonresident hunting in conservation areas.

Standardize on one draw process and standardize on the hotline information. Getting mixed information from the different conservation areas on where to get info and then that info is not kept up to date.

Waterfowl Zones

Waterfowl zones need to be geographical and common sense, not based on random whims. Only have two zones with I70 as the split line.

Plans, Goals and Projections

What are your short term, mid-range and long term projections for the intensively managed multiple wetland areas?

What should waterfowl hunters that depend on these areas expect from the department as we experience these short, mid and long term plans?

UPDATE I had a great conversation with Craig Sondker of MFOR and YOUR MVDHA yesterday, he is in a consistent conversation with Laura Conlee Deputy Director and Reid Viegut waterfowl biologist both of MDC. Craig has been discussing matters with them concerning the useage of Columbia Bottoms and the River Blinds on the Mississippi. Evidently, the River Blinds are NOT a dead issue.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE

From Delta

January 14, 2026

Delta Waterfowl Applauds Secretary Burgum’s Order on Increased Access at National Wildlife Refuges

Action establishes an “open unless closed” stance for hunting and fishing
 BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA — Doug Burgum, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, released Secretarial Order 3447 on Tuesday, a measure to significantly enhance hunting and fishing opportunities on the 573 national wildlife refuges throughout the United States. The order adopts an “open unless closed” policy toward creating new hunting opportunities on refuges. The order contains lan-

guage similar to the 2019 Dingell Act, which states real and practicable reasons must be shown for closures to hunting and recreational shooting on Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service Lands. While Burgum’s order should create significant and meaningful access improvements for duck hunters across the National Wildlife Refuge System, nothing in the order supersedes inviolate sanctuary requirements of migratory bird refuges.

Jason Tharpe, Delta’s chief executive officer, applauded the news Tuesday during his testimony before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries during a special oversight hearing titled, “Hunting and Fishing Access in the Great American Outdoors.”

“We greatly appreciate Secretary Burgum and USFWS Director Brian Nesvik’s continued commitment to enhancing and expanding access to waterfowl hunting on our National Wildlife Refuges and other public lands and waters,” Tharpe said. “The Refuge System is the duck hunter’s greatest legacy asset. We welcome the Secretary’s commitment and stand ready to work to see his vision positively impact these incredibly important habitats for both waterfowl and waterfowl hunters.”

During his Senate confirmation hearing in March 2025, Nesvik stated that the Refuge system would be one of his highest priorities, a position he reaffirmed Tuesday during the House Subcommittee hearing.

Burgum’s Secretarial Order is a continuance of President Trump’s “Making America Beautiful Again Initiative.”

“We are eager to harness this good news from the Administration to translate their vision for

new, incremental hunting opportunities for waterfowl hunters,” said John Devney, Delta's chief policy officer. “Delta has long understood that access and opportunity are at the forefront of the needs of duck hunters. We have consistently prioritized refuge access through the annual USFWS ‘Hunt Fish Rule’ for the past decade. We look forward to working with the USFWS not only to enhance hunting access as the order outlines, but to increase infrastructure investments and habitat management.”

The Science of Disturbance (part 1)

Excerpts from DU, the full article can be found at: Ducks.org

Understanding Waterfowl: The Science of Disturbance

Researchers have studied how hunting disturbance affects waterfowl for nearly a century. Renowned waterfowl biologist Frank Bellrose recorded 50-fold increases in duck numbers in disturbance-free backwaters—areas he coined “natural sanctuaries”—in the 1940s. Bellrose concluded that “security constituted a principal factor governing the relative degree of use made of these areas by waterfowl.” In the 1970s, US Fish and Wildlife Service pilot-biologist Walter Crissey observed similar effects on duck distribution in and around national wildlife refuges and argued that the primary purpose of the refuge system was to concentrate birds in a general area to provide hunting opportunities for waterfowlers in surrounding communities.

In the past, scientific studies examining the impact of hunting pressure on waterfowl distribution were limited to observations

of bird densities in sanctuaries versus hunted areas. However, new technology is providing a wealth of information about how individual birds perceive the hunting landscape, how and why they use sanctuaries, and how they react to different types and levels of disturbance. In fact, GPS transmitter studies from the Central Valley of California to the Mississippi Alluvial Valley have revealed just how sensitive ducks are to hunting pressure. These GPS tracking devices record the locations where ducks rest and feed—hour by hour—while researchers use other methods to simultaneously record hunting pressure and human disturbance on the same landscapes.

Ducks, like any prey species, weigh every decision against risks to their survival. The sound of an approaching mud motor or the sight of an ATV are all “risk cues” for ducks during the hunting season. Studies conducted by several research groups have shown that mallards respond predictably to these cues. By day, the birds crowd into places where people aren’t allowed. After shooting hours, they spill into nearby fields and wetlands to feed.

This safe-by-day, feed-by-night pattern isn’t new, but GPS telemetry has revealed just how consistently ducks adopt this behavior and how their movements and habitat use are influenced by the intensity of hunting pressure. In West Tennessee, we surveyed the presence of spinning-wing decoys from the air and determined that our study area was hunted almost continuously during the duck season, both on weekends and throughout the week. We also found that GPS-marked mallards clearly avoided heavily hunted areas during shooting hours and rarely prospected for new habitats, limiting their movements generally

to two flights per day. Similar findings have been reported in Arkansas, Louisiana, and California. In short, disturbance reshapes daily and even weekly duck schedules. Following are more key findings from our research in Tennessee.

(To be continued)

NEWSLETTER

As part of membership to the Mississippi Valley Duck Hunters Association this newsletter is distributed to the members either by mail or via email. All members who have an email address will be receiving this newsletter via email. With the cost of postage, printing, labeling and handling on the increase this will save YOUR MVDHA a little over \$1.50 per month per member that can be used in other areas. That is a substantial savings, with a projected cost savings of over \$250.00 a year if all members received the newsletter via email. If you still wish to receive your newsletter via snail mail, just let me know at the next member’s meeting or if you wish to no longer receive it by snail mail and want to save the association funds you can provide me your email address by sending me an email at mvdha@mvdha.com. Please consider this, it will save the association money over the time of your membership that can be used else where.

SEASONS

Light Goose Conservation

Season: Feb. 7 — April 30, 2026

Up Coming Events

? Means tentative or have plans for

Mar 11 : Decoy Carving

Apr 8 : Talking Turkey?

General Information

This newsletter is distributed to our active members. For non-active members check the website for the current newsletter. We have our general meeting the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM and our Board of Directors' Meeting every fourth Monday at 7 PM. Members meetings are held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. Board Meetings are also held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. In case of bad weather call Ken Liebel at 314-822-8030 or Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548.

Visit YOUR web site at <https://mvdha.com> to get the most recent news, events and updates. There you will find this newsletter and other helpful information concerning conservation and the great outdoors that we love. If you would like to be added to the email listing of important news and updates you can do that through the web site through the contact us link, fill out the form and make sure you add your email address.

Any comments or suggestions concerning the newsletter or the website can be sent to mvdha@mvdha.com. I am always looking forwards to suggestions concerning content and what you would like to see or be presented in these publications.

Next members meeting: March 11, 2026

Next Board Meeting: March 23, 2026

Members are invited to the Board Meeting

Member's meeting start at 7:30, Board meeting starts at 7:00

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSN. INC.

"A Nonprofit Association of, by, and for the Duck Hunters"

"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

P.O. BOX 6, VALLEY PARK, MO 63088

